

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Mystery of Cabin 105

We were all tired after a long dinner one evening, but nobody wanted to go home. Then somebody shouted, ‘Bring the cigars!’ It was Brisbane — a big, strong man. Everybody turned to look at him.

Lighting his cigar, he said, ‘It’s strange, you know.’ We all stopped talking. ‘It’s strange,’ he said again. ‘People are always asking if anyone’s seen a ghost. Well, I have.’

Somebody said, ‘Tell us the story, Brisbane.’ We lit our cigars, ordered another bottle of champagne, and listened to his story.

‘When I used to travel to America, I liked to sail on certain ships. The Kamtschatka used to be my favourite. It isn’t my favourite now, and I never want to travel on it again.

‘I remember it was a warm morning in June. When I went on board I told the steward I the number of my cabin — 105. He nearly dropped my suitcase.

‘Well, God help you!’ he said quietly.

‘I thought he might be drunk, but I said nothing and followed him. Cabin 105 was a large room with

two berths with curtains around them. Mine was the lower one. That morning the cabin seemed empty and depressing, and I didn't like it.

'I gave the steward some money and he thanked me. 'I'll try to make you comfortable,' he said, and then added quietly, 'If that's possible in this cabin.'

'I was surprised, but again I thought he was drunk. I was wrong.

'Our voyage began. On the first day everything was normal. That night I was tired and went to my cabin early. I noticed another suitcase by the door and a walking stick and an umbrella in the berth above mine. I wasn't happy because I had wanted to be on my own. Who was my companion? I decided to stay awake and see. Later, I was lying in bed in the dark when he came in. He was tall, very thin and pale, with fair hair and a beard and grey eyes. He looked like the type of man who makes money on Wall Street or by gambling. I decided I didn't want to talk to him.

'If he gets up early, I'll get up late,' I said to myself before I went to sleep.

'During the night a loud noise suddenly woke me up. It was the other man jumping out of bed. Then I heard him unlock the cabin door; he ran out very fast, leaving the door open. I heard his footsteps along the passage. I got up angrily to close the door, and

went back to sleep.

‘When I woke up, it was still dark. The air was damp and I felt cold. There was a strange smell in the cabin, like old sea water. I could hear the other man moving in the berth above mine. ‘So he’s come back,’ I thought. Then he made a low sound of pain, and I thought he was feeling seasick. Then I fell asleep.

‘When I woke up again the cabin was still cold. Suddenly I noticed that the window was open, so I got up and closed it. The curtains were closed around the other berth, so I thought the man was asleep. The smell of sea water had disappeared.

‘At about seven o’clock I went for a walk around the ship and I met the ship’s doctor from Ireland, a young man with black hair, blue eyes and a happy face. I said the weather was not very good.

‘It was very cold last night,’ I continued. ‘But my window was open all night, and the room was damp.’

‘Damp! Where is your cabin?’

‘It’s cabin 105...’

‘The ship’s doctor looked at me with big eyes. I asked what was the matter.

‘Oh — nothing,’ he answered. ‘Well, I’ll tell

you. Everybody has complained about that room on our last three trips.’

‘Good. And I’m going to complain, too.’

‘But I believe there’s something... No, I mustn’t frighten you.’

‘Oh, you won’t frighten me. If I get a bad cold, I’ll come to you!’

We laughed, and I offered him a cigar. Then he asked me if I had a room-mate.

‘Yes, a strange man who runs out in the middle of the night and leaves the door open.’

‘The ship’s doctor gave me a curious look. ‘Did he come back?’

‘Yes. He was there when I woke up.’

‘Look, my cabin is big enough for four people. You can sleep there tonight.’ I was really surprised; why was he so anxious about me? I thanked him and said my cabin was fine: there was nothing wrong with it.

‘We doctors aren’t superstitious,’ he said, ‘but please don’t sleep in 105. Come and stay in my cabin.’

‘But why?’

‘Because the last three people who slept there

went overboard.’

‘I looked at him to see if he was joking, but he looked very serious.

‘I said, ‘I really don’t think I’ll be the fourth person to go overboard.’

‘I think you’ll change your mind before we arrive in America,’ he said.

‘After breakfast I went to my cabin to get a book. The curtains around my room-mate’s berth were still closed, so I thought he was asleep. As I came out, I met the steward, who said the captain wanted to see me in his cabin.

‘I want to ask you a favour,’ said the captain when I arrived. ‘Your room-mate has disappeared. Did you notice anything strange about him?’

‘Has he... gone overboard?’ I asked, remembering the ship doctor’s story.

‘Yes, I think so.’

‘That’s incredible! He’s the fourth person.’ And I told him the story of cabin 105. I also told him what had happened to me in the night.

‘That’s the same story the other room-mates told me,’ the captain said. ‘Nobody saw the man last night. The steward found his berth empty this morning and

looked for him, but he's disappeared. Please don't tell the other passengers. I don't want my ship to get a bad reputation for suicide. You can sleep in any cabin you like for the rest of the voyage. Is that alright?'

'Thank you, Captain, but my cabin is empty now so I'll stay there.'

'The captain tried to change my mind, but I told him I was happy to have the room to myself. I asked him if the steward could remove my room-mate's things and do something about the damp and the window. After I left the captain, I saw the ship's doctor and we played cards. I went to my room late.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Cabin of Terror**

In my cabin I thought of the tall man, now dead somewhere in the ocean, and I opened the curtains around his berth. It was empty. Suddenly I noticed that the window was open and secured with a hook. Angry, I went to look for the steward. I showed him the window.

‘Why is it open?’ I shouted. ‘I’ll report you to the captain.’

‘The steward was frightened and he closed the window. ‘Nobody can keep this window closed at night, sir. Look, is that locked or not? You try it and see, please.’

‘The window was securely locked.

‘Well, you’ll see that in half an hour it’ll be open again — and secured, too. That’s the horrible thing, sir — it is secured with the hook!’

‘I checked the window again. ‘If I find it open in the night, I’ll give you ten pounds. But it’s impossible.’

‘We said goodnight, and I went to bed. I tried to sleep, but I couldn’t. Sometimes I looked at the window; it was closed, and I smiled thinking of the steward’s story. As I was falling asleep, I suddenly felt some cold air and sea water on my face. I jumped out of bed, and the movement of the ship threw me onto the sofa under the window. It was open — and secured with the hook! I was surprised but not scared. I closed the window and locked it. Then I stood watching it in the dark cabin.

‘Suddenly I heard a sound behind me and turned round. A sound of pain came from the berth above mine. I opened the curtain and put my hand in: there was somebody in it! The air was very damp, and there was a horrible smell of old sea water. I touched a man’s arm; it was wet, and as cold as ice. As I pulled it, the thing came towards me — a soft, wet, heavy thing — and it fell against me. I fell back across the cabin. In a moment the door opened and the thing ran out. I followed it as fast as possible. I’m sure I saw it in the low light of the corridor before it disappeared. Now I was really frightened.

‘This is crazy,’ I thought. Had I really seen it? I



went back into the cabin, lit a candle and saw with horror that the window was open. I looked at the other berth; it smelt of sea water but it was dry! I closed the window and sat on the sofa all night. The window did not open.

‘When dawn came, I got dressed and went on deck, where I saw the ship’s doctor.

‘You were right, Doctor,’ I said. ‘There’s something very strange about cabin 105.’

‘Did you have a bad night?’ he asked.

‘So I told him everything. Then I asked if he believed me.

‘Yes, of course. You must come and stay in my cabin tonight.’

‘Why don’t you come and stay in mine for one night? Help me to understand what happened.’

‘I’m sorry, but no. I don’t want to see any ghosts.’

‘I laughed at him. ‘Do you really believe it was a ghost?’

‘Can you explain it then?’ he asked angrily. ‘No, you can’t!’

‘But you’re a doctor, a man of science. You must know there’s a rational explanation.’

‘There isn’t a rational explanation. I hope you find somebody to help you. Good morning, Mr Brisbane.’ And the ship’s doctor continued his walk.

‘I didn’t want to spend another night in my cabin, but I was obstinate and decided to do it alone. I couldn’t find anybody to help me. Later, I met the captain and told him this.

‘I’ll stay with you tonight,’ he said, ‘and we’ll see what happens. I think we can find out what’s wrong with that berth.’

‘He brought a carpenter to the cabin and told him to examine the berth very carefully. When the carpenter finished his work he said, ‘In my opinion it’s better to lock the door with some big screws. Four people have died already. This cabin is haunted.’

‘I’ll try it for one more night,’ I answered.

‘I was feeling better now because I had the captain’s company for the night. He was a calm, brave man, and he really wanted to

solve the mystery. I was smoking a cigar at about ten o’clock that evening when he came to speak to me.

‘This is a serious problem, Mr Brisbane,’ he said. ‘We’ve lost four passengers on four trips, so we must find out what’s wrong. If nothing happens

tonight, we'll try tomorrow. Are you ready?'

'We went down to cabin 105. The captain closed the door and locked it. He put my big suitcase in front of the door and sat on it, so nothing could get out. The window was closed. I opened the curtains around the other berth, and put my lamp there. Then I checked around the cabin and under my bed and the sofa.

'Nobody can come into the cabin, nobody can open the window, and only you and I are in the cabin,' I said.

'Very good,' answered the captain calmly. 'So if we see anything, it's only our imagination — or something supernatural.'

'Do you really believe it's something supernatural?' I asked sleepily.

'No, I don't. What are you looking at?'

'I didn't answer. I was looking at the window; was the lock really beginning to turn or was it my imagination? Yes, perhaps it was — very slowly, so slowly that I wasn't really sure.

'It's moving!' the captain cried. 'But what's that smell? I can smell old sea water — can you?'

'Yes. It's strange because the cabin is dry,' I said.

Just then my lamp suddenly went out. As I stood up to get it, the captain jumped up with a loud cry of surprise. I turned and ran towards him as he called for help. He was trying to stop the window from opening, but the lock was turning against his hands. Suddenly the window opened. The captain, his face very pale, stood by the door so nobody could escape.

‘There’s somebody in that berth!’ he shouted, his eyes big and scared. ‘Stand by the door while I look. It won’t escape.’

‘But I jumped up and put my hands into the upper berth. Inside there was something ghostly and horrible, and it moved in my hands. It felt like the body of a drowned man — cold, soft, and wet from a long time in the water. I held on to it tightly but it was as strong as ten men. And it moved, a smooth, wet thing with a putrid smell, and dead white eyes that stared at me, and wet hair over its dead face. It pushed against me, put its arms around my neck, and forced me back. I fought with the thing, but it was too strong, and finally I fell and let it go.

‘It moved quickly towards the captain. He tried to hit it, but he fell down with a cry of horror. As the thing stood over the captain, I almost screamed with terror, but I had no voice. Suddenly the thing disappeared. It seemed to go through the window, but

I don't know how that was possible.

'The captain and I lay on the floor for a long time. When I moved at last, I knew my arm was broken. I stood up and tried to help the captain; he wasn't injured, but he was in a bad state of shock.

'That's the end of my story. The ship's carpenter put four big screws in the door of 105, and no passengers slept in it again. If you ever travel on The Kamtschatka and ask for that cabin, the captain will tell you that it's occupied. Yes, it is occupied — by a dead thing!'